



International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs
Mouvement International des Intellectuels Catholiques
Movimiento Internacional de Intelectuales Católicos

Human Rights Council

13th session

Item 9: General Debate (Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

23 March 2010

Speaker:

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Mr. President,

During the 2009 DRC, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, **Mr. Githu Muigai**, reaffirmed that discrimination on the grounds of caste constitutes a form of racial discrimination. He also said that in the absence of such recognition by the concerned states, it will not be possible to effectively address the serious human rights violations and discrimination suffered by individuals and groups on grounds of caste and other systems of inherited status. In his latest report to the UN General Assembly (**A/64/271**), **Mr. Muigai** also called on states to 'engage in substantive discussions' on this topic and 'rally around' the draft UN principles and guidelines to eliminate this form of discrimination.

Pax Romana welcomes the inclusion of countering discrimination on the grounds of caste as a thematic priority in OHCHR's Strategic Management Plan 2010-2011.¹

We also support the High Commissioner's commitment to continuously working on caste-discrimination as a global human rights concern.²

Mr. President,

¹ Section on 'Field Activities' in the Asia/Pacific region,
<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/SMP2010-2011.pdf>

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<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=9540&LangID=E>, &
<http://www.unhchr.ch/hurricane/hurricane.nsf/view01/30429B61FC0628ECC125764100390D4A?opendocument>

We support the statement by the Dutch government at the High-Level Segment of this 13th session of the Council, which urged the Council to bring "Caste-based discrimination" into its agenda and to provide mechanisms and procedures to address this concern of 260 million people.

We also welcome the support expressed by the Independent Expert on minority Issues to the draft UN principles and guidelines to tackle this form of discrimination in her annual report to the HRC (**A/HRC/13/23**).

Caste discrimination is a global human rights concern affecting approximately 260 million people in a number of countries worldwide, especially in South Asia. We welcome the fact that governments in some affected countries have enacted strong legislative measures to prevent this form of discrimination. India has for example prohibited caste discrimination and 'untouchability' in its constitution and law, more clearly than any international covenant has done. However, the National Crime Records Bureau of India recorded 136,367 cases of crimes against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes during 2003-2007. Governments need to address the powerful 'mindset' of caste hierarchy and state of impunity by ensuring the implementation of existing laws and strengthening of national mechanisms and institutions.

Pax Romana, therefore, recalling the support of a number of states and independent experts and recommends that the Human Rights Council should consider in a resolution to:

1. Welcome the publication of the final report (**A/HRC/11/CRP.3**) on discrimination based on work and descent highlighting the need for Principles and Guidelines for addressing this form of discrimination.
2. Invite states, UN agencies, non-state actors to make voluntary use of the UN Draft Principles and Guidelines on Work and Descent-based Discrimination as a guiding framework;
3. Decide to hold a panel debate in the HRC on this topic.
4. Urge all concerned states to fully comply with obligations to implement concluding observations of ICERD and general recommendations No of XXIX.